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LE CAHIER JAUNE
POEMS

BY

ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON.



ETON, 1892.

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LE CAHIER JAUNE

P O E M S

BY

ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON,

Of Eton College.

*"Non intret Cato theatrum meum, aut si intraverit,
spectet."*

1892.

Printed by Geo. New, Eton.]

To M. B.

Oh patron of my fitful song,
True heart, brave heart, oh pure and good,
My praises cannot do thee wrong;
I cannot praise thee as I would.

Read as thou wilt, mother and friend,
And should the critic sense approve—
It may not? Hasten to the end,
And fill the vacancy with love.

And if thy dreams were other far
For thy inconstant heedless child,
Love takes the gleanings as they are,
And so the world is reconciled.

And should the strong years smite me through,
And leave my yearnings unconfessed,
Remember that I thought of you,
And honoured you, and loved you best.

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PREFACE.

—:O:—

An author, says Dr. Johnson in his life of Dryden, *has a right to print his own works, and need seek no apology in falsehood.* If the poems here collected are not their own apology, they will deserve none. They make no claim to be an important contribution to the philosophy of truth; they are only the faithful presentation of some of the simple and integral experiences of every man's life. These lie behind the futile bitterness of Politics, the dull promises of Socialism, the misty theories of Education, and the curious Economical speculations that bring interest to so many and peace to so few. Scheming in the interests of others is often little more than an excuse for not facing individual difficulties, but the unwilling egotism which must transfuse the expression of the struggles of the unit, can only be excused by the consciousness that such experience is after all a common inheritance.

Poetry is the most speculative of all ventures ; to have the world at your feet if you win ; to be less than nothing if you lose ; and yet there is room for the prophet Obadiah with his obscure identity and his twenty-one verses, in the same eternal volume that holds the inspired glories of Isaiah and the deathless vehemence of Job. And even a latter-day rhymers may share in the divine downfall of those *who exalt themselves like the eagle and set their nest among the stars.*

A. C. B.

Eton, 1892.

QUID DEDICATUM.

Oh what should be the poet's prayer
Before his own Apollo's shrine ?
Ease and renown the world deems fair,
Not thithier should his heart incline.

Not for the wealth that others love—
Red gold, and jewels' varied gleam ;
For meadows, where the slow herds move,
Encircled by a silent stream ;

But for a wise and generous heart ;
Too true to hate, too wise to sigh,
And when the fiery thoughts depart,
To lay his broken music by.

Eton, 1887.

SECRETS.

Home of my heart, when wilt thou ope
 Thy silent doors to let me in?
 What! not one glimpse to quicken hope
 Of all that I aspire to win?

So near and yet so oft denied!
 The roses on my trellis throw
 Their heedless scent from side to side,
 Yet will not whisper what they know.

The yellow moon that hangs and peers
 Amid the icy horns on high,
 Leans to the listening earth, yet fears
 To tell the secret of the sky.

O pines, that whisper in the wind,
 When lingering herds from pasture come,
 Breathe somewhat of your steadfast mind:
 The hour is yours: yet ye are dumb.

Sweet answering eyes, you too have learned
 The secret that you will not tell—
 I should have known it, but you turned
 That moment, and the lashes fell!

Home of my heart, why stand so cold
 And silent? There is mirth within:
 The sun sinks low: the day is old:
 Oh let the baffled wanderer in.

DREAMS.

I dreamed that I was sitting at a feast ;—
 The shrill insensate laughter rang, and eyes
 Flashing, made light of bitter memories ;
 And they that spake me fairest, loved me least.

But one that sate so silent, you had deemed
 Her haply proud, sent such a wistful gaze,
 From eyes down-dropt and lips of sad amaze,
 That I awoke—ah ! would I had not dreamed.

As one that sits amid the thunderous din
 Of rattling gear, and wheels that grate and grind,
 Far into night prolonging his grim day ;
 And past the trembling casements, clear-defined
 Steals the pure quiet moon, that seems to say
 Peace, peace is mine ; a peace thou may'st not win.

Cambridge, 1885.

FEARS.

All night I said, before sleep kissed my eyes,—
 And broke from dim unquiet dreams to say,
I will tread down the fears I served to-day
Break the dull spell, and bid the true soul rise.

Will meet her sweet glance with a happy gaze,
Her gentle voice with words of very fire,
Unseal the secret of my deep desire :
And all the unuttered yearning of my days.

But when you came, my darling, straight dismayed
 At your bright beauty, all I dared was this,
 To look and smile and lightly touch your hand,
 Not smooth away the truant lock that strayed
 And drooping, kissed the brow I dared not kiss,
 And the sweet eyes that will not understand.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

What made you turn your face to me,
 Then at that moment, when the hour
 Was sick with longing, and the tree
 Hung listless, waiting for the shower ?

How often had I stood before
 There, where I leaned beside your chair,
 And faintly through the open door
 Glimmered the weary climbing stair.

We talked of many trivial things,
 I know not half the words we said,
 Yet memory back upon me brings
 The moment when you turned your head.

The open book unheeded lay ;
 The lamp was lit : the hand hung free,
 I wonder, could the angels say,
 What made you turn your face to me ?

You, were you weary ? I, I know
 Was sick of shadows, and the breath
 Of fears and fancies, and the slow
 Slow beckonings of doom and death.

Ah, dear, I know not : quick, forget
The words I said—be calm and free,
Let me remember : yet, ah yet,
What made you turn your face to me ?

Lambeth, 1888.

DRIFTING.

I sailed with a witch in a car of foam,
 Over the sleeping lake :
 And she said : *Sail on to my haunted home ;*
 Then did I answer make.
Not so, I cried, I will ride and roam,
I will sail all day in our bell of foam,
But I may not go to your haunted home,
And your hand I will not take.

She smiled a smile like a lake of ice
 When the warm winds over it quiver,
 And she said, *Your choice is wary and wise :*
We will sail, sail on for ever ;
Over the sleeping forest go,
And scale the unvisited heights of snow,
And ride unharmed where the whirlwinds blow,
And skim o'er the deadly river.

She spoke of marvellous things with me,
 On her knee I pillowed my head :
 We heard the surge of the tumbling sea
 As westward we fared and fled :—
 Till my heart was steeped in her fantasy,
 And once as we floated merrily,
Oh here is your hand in mine, said she,
And here is my home, she said.

The idle music died in my brain,
And left me alone, awake ;
And I was aware of an endless plain,
And a dizzy, haunting ache ;
I sigh all day, but I sigh in vain
For a sound of the murmuring voice again,
For a draught of healing to ease my pain,
And a hand for mine to take.

I.aon, 1891.

THE WATER-OUSEL.

A shadow by the water's edge,—
 A flash across the mossy ledge,
 That stems the roaring race.
 Dark were his plumes as dim twilight,
 The crescent on his throat gleamed white,
 The breeze was in his face.

I follow, but he flies before,
 And when I gain the sandy shore
 Close, close, methinks, behind :—
 His tiny footprints speck the beach,
 He fleets to some sequestered reach,
 A shadow on the wind.

Love flies me as that dusky bird,
 I too have marked his flight, and heard
 The rustle of his wings.
 He leads me with divine deceit,
 To trace the print of vanished feet,
 Not where he nests and sings.

CURA SUI.

You may stay or you may travel
 In search of ease or pelf,
 Yet you never shall unravel
 The tangle of yourself;
 You may climb the skyward mountain,—
 One with you shall ride,
 You may dive beneath the fountain;—
 He'll be at your side:
 Be it up, be it down,
 Be it waste or town,
 You may fly from child or wife, but he'll
 be ne'er denied.

Where the shepherd lads are calling
 On the windswept down,
 When the twilight closes, falling
 O'er the white-walled town:
 You may lose your heart in wonder
 At the low-hung starry sphere,
 He will chide the merry blunder
 Saying, *I am here.*
 You may wave a threatening arm:
 He will plead, *I meant no harm,*
When you flout me, when you spurn me,
 you are doubly dear.

Oh never seek to move him ;
 He is all too strong :
If you say you do not love him,
 You do him wrong.
Yet there's a certain potion
 Lies at your door,
If he feel that sacred motion
 You shall chide him nevermore.
 He will fly, he will run,
 He will scale the sun,
And the more you seek to stay him
 he will sing and soar.

Pontresina, 1891.

MY FRIEND.

Where is my friend to-day ?
 Twas but a week ago
 That he smiled in my face with his careless grace,
 Loved me—but could not stay,—
What of his work, would I know ?
Little as yet to say.
Nothing as yet to show !

Where is the soul austere ?
 Nourished from springs remote,
 Delicate, bright with a wizard light,
 Shy as a maiden's fear,
 Bold as a trumpet's note,
 Sweet as the woodlark's throat ?—
 Only he is not here :

Ever some hint perplexed
 Spoke in the quivering flame,
 Some shadow of doom from the gates of gloom ;
 Often I cheered him, vexed,
 Chiding his tardy fame ;
 Oh, when I see him next
 Will he be still the same ?

Where are the restless feet ?
 Where are the starry eyes ?
 The caressing hand—and the brain that planned
 Never to realise ?

Oh, when we next shall meet,
 How shall I dare to prize
 What seemed so incomplete ?

Hark to the world to-day !
 Yesterday someone said
 That he masked with a smile a worldling's wile ;
 Self-centred, cold and gay ;
 Now that my friend is dead,
 Hark to the prayers they pray !
 See the false tears they shed !

What lies here on the bed ?
 What is this pinched white thing,
 With a stony eye and a lip that's dry ?
 See I drive from the stiffened head,
 You fly with the buzzing wing ;
 Presently when I am fled,
 He will return and bring—

Nay, but I do him wrong,
 Nothing of him I see,
 Save the shrouding dusk, the chrysalis husk,
 Oh but we loved it, we !
 He is serene and strong,
 Hath he a thought of me
 Under the angels' song ?

If it be well with him,
If it be well, I say,
I will not try with a childish cry
To draw him thence away :
Only my day is dim,
Only I long for him,
Where is my friend to-day ?

Eton, 1892.

THE DEAD POET.

The child that leans his ear beside the shell,
 Grows grave to hear the multitudinous roar,
 Remembered echoes of the pulsing swell
 That sets from shore to shore ;
 But heeds not that the cool and rosy rim
 Once bulged with shuddering growth of beard and horn,
 That pushed with loathly grasp about the dim
 Untrodden caves forlorn :
 That day by day from ooze and weltering slime
 Built up his filmy chambers, cell by cell,
 Yet only schemed to shelter for a time
 His shrinking softness well.

My poet, thus I drink thy dreaming soul,
 I scan the self-wrought fabric line by line,
 I mark the mounting music surge and roll,
 Inviolatè, divine ;
 Yet when thy weary eyes grew hard in death,
 The busy crowd laid hands upon thy bones,
 They probed the impulse of thy lightest breath,
 And analysed thy groans ;
 With down-drawn lips where lurked a curious smile,
 They traced the devious error of thy days ;
 They said, *We will be strong and stern awè*
 Before we dare to praise.

They ask by what dark alchemy he drew
 So sweet a savour from so rank a root,
 So while the yeasty slander worked and grew,
 I sighed irresolute.

I thank thee, O my poet ! What thou art
 Is mine, and what thou wert is not for me ;
 Perchance the very sin that clutched thy heart,
 Thy fruitless agony,
 Winged most the soaring spirit : hadst not erred,
 Thou hadst not raged the dragging mire to shun
 With battling pinion, as the lowliest bird
 Sails nearest to the sun :
 I take the airy structure, lean my ear
 Beside it, and the wizard echoes roll ;
 My heart grows clean and I forget to fear,
 O thou imperious soul !

Edon, 1890.

GOOD-BYE

It was that wild and chill November morning,
 When the sullen clouds were laden with the snow,
 There was whispered in the dark a tender warning
 Saying, faintly but so surely, you must go.

You had journeyed times enough—we learned to miss you—
 There was fond and eager talk of winds and ways;
 You had waved your hand at parting, bade us kiss you,—
 But this was for your journey of all days!

How we counted through the hours when you had vanished!
 How we said, *She is here, she is there.*
 Now the heart on which we leaned must be banished
 From the Here to the Everywhere!

You had always wanted little:—and we gave you
 Less than little, now we sadly think :
 And our aching hearts were powerless to save you
 From the shadow while you waited on the brink.

The tender soul that only schemed to lighten
 Every burden, and despised its own decay,
 Faced the silence and the dark, and dared to brighten
 The heaviness that brooded on the way.

Thus you left us with your valour unabated,
 No diminution of that eager love ;
 In a moment, in the dawn of hope, translated
 To perfect your faithful energies above.

Are you thinking with a gracious wonder,
Of our sightless sorrows, our half hearted mirth ?
O'er your head the angels' song, yet under—
Ah forget not ! turns the old uneasy earth.

Ah, forgive us,—it is love and not resistance,
In the golden mansions will you think of home ?
Are the brave eyes looking, smiling through the distance,
Are you waiting, will you meet us, when we come ?

Eton, 1890.

ALL THAT WE KNEW OF HIM.

We bore him from the little hall
That through the quiet years,
Had heard his laughing welcome fall
On none but loving ears.

There was no hint of winter wild,
No stir upon the hill ;
October on the heights was mild
And in the plain was still.

Wrapt in the low-hung mist we moved ;
Below us dimly seen
The shapely woodlands that he loved,
The stream that slips between.

We marked the red beech overhead
Her flaming pall unfold,
The poplars underfoot had spread
Their pale smooth store of gold.

The year in dying shewed so fair,
We drew serener breath ;
It seemed as though the very air
Were in the arms of death.

Till calmer, freer still, we sit
 Within the storied fane,
 Where that harmonious soul was writ
 On pillar and on pane.

And presently the words were said ;
 The love we could not tell ;
 And in the chambers of the dead
 We bade our friend farewell,

And lingering by the churchyard wall
 We pause a little space,
 And half forgetting, half recall
 The love that lit his face.

And yet so gently fell the end
 We cannot wholly weep ;
 He prayed, and smiled upon his friend,
 And turning, fell asleep.

Even death, whom sufferers far and wide
 Have found so great, so grim,
 Stept smiling to that sweet fireside,
 And spake of God with him.

What though he did not from fierce foes
 The bleeding trophies tear,
 Yet gently morn by morn arose
 The incense of his prayer.

They say that nought but hard-won fights
 Can set poor souls above ;
 But is there none whom he invites
 Through ministries of love ?

Some souls there be that fight but fret,
 That act but agonize,
 And in the dust of earth forget
 The silence of the skies.

And oh dear friend whom neath the sod,
 We lay so trustfully,
 Oh in the labour house of God
 What is prepared for thee ?

A day shall be when what we marr'd
 He shall make whole and new,
 And where we thought Him false or hard
 He will prove kind and true.

Then shall we see the souls that slept
 Alert without constraint,
 And all whose earthly vesture kept
 The royal spirit faint.

And kneeling at his Father's feet,—
 Still smiling from the skies,—
 The soul so strenuously sweet,
 And so unworldly wise.

Stoke Bishop, 1884.
(J. F. Wickenden.)

AN OLD DIARY.

At evening ere the stars were lit,
 I idly turned my grandsire's page ;—
 The faltering verse, the heedless wit,
 Young counsel striving to be sage,
 The careless flotsam of the mind,
 The laughter of the silent years,
 The loves as idle as the wind,
 With here and there a trace of tears.

I gaze upon the pictured face,
 His laughing eyes, his sunny brow,
Thy thoughts of glory and of grace
Are writ in dust, I said, and thou
Art slumbering 'neath thy headstone grim,
Beside the narrow smoky street ;
The misty evening closes dim
About thee, where the house-fronts meet.

Thy kindly mood that cheered with jest
And ready laugh the sullen day,
So frankly, tediously expressed,
I set them for a while away,
And o'er thee not unkindly bent
Across the haze of vanished years,
I can forgive thy merriment,
And love thee better for thy tears.

One hour was thine of mortal pain :
Thou hadst no season to efface
What might have marked thee light or vain,
What might have wronged thee with thy race,
I scan the moments I have spent ;
God grant if such an end be mine,
That my recorded merriment
May seem and be as pure as thine.

God grant that in the eternal fold,
When all are safely gathered in,
When we have all our secrets told
And learnt humility from sin,
We two may taste of heavenly light,
And walk together, free and wise,
Not nearer in the Father's sight,
But mindful of our earthly ties.

Eton, 1892.

IN COWPER'S LETTERS.

Poet of home, green walks and fireside ease,
 The trivial joys in which our days are spent,
 How cheerfully thy tender merriment
 Falls on our ear in such dark hours as these !
 When the sick thoughts that did thy spirit freeze
 Hover about our mortal tenement,
 And unsubstantial fear and vague lament
 People the sighing of the restless breeze.

Thy hedgerow elms that stand so starved and sere
 When winter crusts each twig with crystal rime,
 Still break in cloudy greenness, when the year
 Wheels into warmth, and 'tis the budding time :
 If I grow old and sad, why so didst thou !
 Yet love hath crowned the pale world-weary brow.

WILLIAM BLAKE.

O strenuous spirit, in thy serious cell
Riding on rays, upborne by angel's wings,
Fed and sustained from sweet and secret springs
Not for loud conquests, but to labour well :
Yet and anon the dolorous curtain fell,
And thy vext brain in sick imaginings,
Peopled the dark with fiery rushing things,
And all the staring larva-brood of hell.

Not thine the crown that binds the poet's brow,
But Art's ethereal halo, and the rare
Fine diadem for men of simple mould,
Who speak but as they feel, and cannot bow
Nor truckle, though in perilous waters rolled
Of penury, derision and despair.

Eton, 1892.

DEAN SWIFT.

Alas, alas ! sad, bitter, loving man ;
 With jests for others, to thyself least kind ;
 That didst with studied boldness dare to scan
 The shadowy horrors of the darkened mind.

A heart that ached for love, by nature made
 'Neath loving lips to grow more true and mild,
 Mutely itself upon the altar laid,
 From that true self by truer self exiled.

As that prophetic roll, upon the lip
 Of acrid savour, Heaven's own manna proved ;
 Aye ! there was sweetness here, mid stain and slip
 Of word and thought, to witness how he loved !

Thou didst look love and sorrow in the face,
 And sorrow choosing, didst but love defer,
 And love hath crowned thee in a calmer place,
 With her who soothed thy aching life, and her

Whose weakness made thee cruel, who designed
 A jealous thrust and fell upon the steel ;
 Let those who blame the unforgiving mind
 Learn from thy caustic silence how to feel.

Alas ! what means for us thy troubled face ?
 The pure in heart still striving to be foul ?
 The generous spirit scheming for a place ?
 The filthy jest that masked the serious soul ?

This : that our days are wholly incomplete ;—
Some baseness mars them, some unbanished taint,
That clogs in miry ways the aspiring feet,
And specks the robe of many a willing saint.

We, in the dust of some disordered room,
For our dropt treasure peer and grope aghast ;
Then if the hand encounter through the gloom
The golden circle, seize it, hold it fast !

Ripley, 1892.

(In Swift's Life and Works).

THOMAS GRAY.

Singer most melancholy, most austere,
So overcharged with greatness, that thy frame
Was all too frail to feed the aspiring flame,
And sank in chill disdain and secret fear,

Save that thy idle fingers now and then
Touched unawares a slender chord divine;
Oh if but half the silence that was thine
Were shared to-day by clamorous minstrel men!

I thread the woodland where thy feet have strayed,
The gnarled trunks dreaming out their ancient tale
Are fair as then; the same sad chime I hear
That floats at eve across the purple vale;
The music of thy speech is in my ear,
And I am glad because thou wast afraid.

GILBERT WHITE.

Thou wast a poet, though thou knew'st it not,
Then on a merry morning, when the thrush
Fluted and fluted musical in the bush,
And blackbirds whisked along thy garden-plot.

Didst watch an hour beside thy hanger's foot
The quivering kestrel hung aloft the skies
To mark aught stirring, or with pensive eyes
In cherry-orchards didst forecast the fruit.

And shall I deem it idle thus to scan
The myriad life, and reverently wait,
A patient learner, auguring, behind
The restless hand, the unhesitating mind?
This was thy daily task, to learn that man
Is small, and not forget that man is great.

Eton, 1892.

MOLINOS.

Oh, I wait from hour to hour,
Just wait what the next may bring ;
A blossom, a bud, a flower,
Or a bitter crawling thing.
I think, when the tense will bends,
Of all I have missed or marred ;
Yet I know it is God who sends,
And it is not so hard.

I looked in the years gone by
For great flowing gifts from his hand ;
I stared at the fathomless sky,
And knew I should understand ;
Now the folk pass on in the street,
And rarely stop at my gate,
I bless them, the careless feet,
Though I only wait.

Through the open windows the sun
Shines rarely, parting the gloom ;
He stays e'er his course be run
To enliven the lonely room ;
Yet over the racing rack
He shines without stint or stain,
The winds blow keen at his back,
And shall I complain ?

Ah yes ! I can wait and smile,
I can scan the long road where it lies,
Like a ribbon for many a mile,
Till it melt in the infinite skies ;
And when I have watched my fill,
And the chill eve cometh late,
Let me say, *I have learned thy will,*
I can wait, still wait.

Eton, 1891.

VER SCHOLASTICUM.

Paul of the haggard face, bright eyes sore wearied of books ;

Paul with the brow of a sage, but supple and strong as a boy ;
Graceful and fresh of frame, and save for the desolate looks,
Meet for the prize of a friend and meet for a maiden's joy.

Paul on a morn in May, when woods are better than men,

Walked in a garden-ground, sad, wistful, and heavy-eyed :
Shuddered to think of the mute and monotonous walk of
his pen,

Hated the grim silent gape of the folios stacked at his
side,

Laurels around him glittered metallic ; to left and right

Broad green fingers of chestnuts were spread and unfurled
to the day ;

Up through her gray-green smoothness the lilac pushed to
the light

Clubs and clusters of purple, and poured her scents in
his way.

Up through the deep meadow-grass had floated the gold
of spring.

Stirred and swayed on the surface in yellow and white
and red,

Hid in the depths of the copse he heard the linnet sing,

And a thrush peered out with her beaded eyes and her
timorous head.

Suddenly over his path an odour was wafted and blown,
 Striking the flash of a fancy that passed and left him sad :
 For he seemed as a child in wonder to stray demure and
 alone

In the fields of the home that had borne him, in days
 when his heart was glad.

And he looked on a garden border, and taught by the
 pleading spell,

On a sunny wall, and beyond it an acre of golden grain,
 And the great blue lustrous flies, that never a footfall fell
 But they bustled and hummed for a moment, and straight
 were silent again.

Gone—and the strange sweet longing for days that are
 long since dead

Flooded his heart in an instant, and stirred in the sunlit
 day;

For love still reigns in the heart, though knowledge rules
 in the head,

And it was not only sadness he knew as he turned away.

Cambridge, 1885.

(*Cambridge Review*),

DEMETRIUS.

I think that you love me, dear :
 Cannot I love you too ?
For a week, a month, a year ?
 Will that be enough for you ?

Why yes, I could yield you this,
 I could whisper, gaze and pray,
I could clasp your hand and kiss,
 And that is enough, you say.

Your thirst is so deep, so deep,
 You pant for the cooling wave ;
Yet the treacherous ripples creep
 And crawl in their moving grave.

Better to stand on the brink,
 Better to faint for breath,
Than slowly to dream and sink
 In the delicate hands of death.

I have learned in a harder school,
 Have dallied with scorn and shame
Where the wise man envies the fool,
 And the nameless dies for a name.

I am sad enough to be wise,
I am strong enough to be hard,
Let me look but once in your eyes,
And see what I might have marred.

Purity, hope and light
Are stronger than you and I :—
So we will be wise to-night ;—
Remember, and say goodbye.

Eton, 1892.

MISERRIMUS.

When I am dead, and laid in gloom,
 Oh, drop no tears above my tomb :
 There let the evening breathe, and there
 The wild rose trail her fragrant hair,
 And in the opening of the spring
 The throstle and the finch shall sing.
 The dews slow-dropping overhead
 Are gentler than the tears ye shed :
 And wailings of a wintry wind
 Are meeter far, if not so kind.

There shall I lie so calm at last
 To hear the waters trickle past.
 Down through the mould from stone to stone
 The drops are slipping, one by one,
 Struggling to win from troubled shores
 The clear, deep, silent reservoirs.

Some day it may be I shall feel
 A thin white fibre through me steal,—
 A root that reaching through the stones
 Twines unaware about my bones,
 And draws me to the upper day,
 Till haply on a morn in May,
 In some pure flowerbell sweetly pent
 Or rose or myrtle innocent,
 I see the happy dawn again,
 The churchyard walls, the gilded vane,

The broad brown meadow-lands, with tree
 And homestead dotted cheerily,
 And in the tumult of delight
 Scatter my scents from left to right,
 So prodigal of all their grace
 To deck my odorous sleeping-place,
 That the dull villager who strays
 Unheeding through the church-yard ways
 May stoop to draw my breath, and tell
 His mates how sweet the myrtles smell.

Ah, it is all too fair, too fair !
 I may not win the plenteous air.
 Calm thoughts, and the caressing sense
 Of love, are made for innocence :
 And though sin wearies hearts, and shame
 Is hard to bear, yet ours the blame :
 Not every suffering can impart
 The rest it craves : ah ! mortal heart,
 Think'st thou that thou may'st sin, and rot
 As still as he that sinneth not ?

I am not what you thought me, friends :
 How can my spirit make amends ?
 You saw me calm and deemed it meant—
 This apathy—a still content :
 And took a sullen acquiescence
 For gentle love's transforming presence.

Oh ! better weep not o'er my grave
Than claim the love I never gave.

Now through the vast unshrinking years
This careless heart will sit in tears,
And through the darkness and the press
Of pain, will start from dreaminess,
To think real thoughts, and wholly prove
The spirit and the strength of love :
So weep not now : the dark shall teach
To break from silence into speech,
The love that grows in bitterness
Some day this chilly soul shall bless.

Yet blame me not too much, but keep
The venom'd tongue of ire asleep ;
Deep was my fault, and faultier far
The sloth for effort, peace for war.
God knoweth why His mark is set
On this and that, nor doth forget
Why one is foul and base, and one
Is lovely when his work is done ;
Why over one his lights are shed,
And one is sore dispirited.
I know not, I : but he who gave
Bounds to the thunders of the wave,
And with a silent glory fills
The purple spaces of the hills :
He knoweth : and what He hath planned
Is worthy of the master hand.

Farewell : why weepest ? If I be
Worthy His purpose, thou shalt see
How out of taint of earthly spot
He works His wonders : and if not,
He knoweth : leave me ; I have said,—
Henceforth I sit among the dead.

Cambridge, 1883.

(*Cambridge Review*).

THE GALE.

When the storm on my window dashes the rain,
When the gulls wheel landward and the larches strain,
When through the bleared mists the sun stares pale,
And the spray from the ripple whirls in the gale,
When by the headland the teal huddle back,
And the hern in the marshpool is sleek and black,
When the hissing blast shakes the rain from the heath,
And the squalls run dark o'er the creek beneath,
When the deer in the corrie by the grey rock lie,
And the hills grow higher and are lost in the sky,
When the sheep grow languid in their sodden wool,
And the fly from the moorland floats struggling in the pool,
When the wives of mariners on the Father call,
And wonder if the tempest bring aught but bane to all,
Ah, better silence ! pile the hearth high at home ;
'Twill be time to make thy prayer when the sunshine come.

THE BIRD-CHERRY.

Three days ago, and yonder sullen tree,
That shades the limit of my garden glade,
Was dense with leaf, and cast so sad a shade
There was no place for summer minstrelsy ;
To-day it streams with lavish fragrance ; see,
How close the milky spires of bloom are laid ;
How short a space ! To-morrow sees it fade,
And strips in snowy wreck its gallantry.

How near and yet how far ! Not lingering,
Not making haste, our whirling planet runs ;
Not mistress of herself the wilful spring,
But shares the punctual race of myriad suns.
And those imperious hands sustain, control
The faltering faith of this inconstant soul.

Eton, 1892.

STORM AND TEMPEST.

The gale thunders on the roof ;
The raindrops splash the wall ;
And the stars shine far aloof ;
And God sees all.

Through the rack of flying cloud
The watery moon wades on,
And the lime trees whisper loud ;
The brief day is gone.

Within the lamp is lit,
And the fire burns red and warm,
And I ponder as I sit,
Glad and free from harm.

Strange that the driving cloud
Doth not stay my merriment !
When the wind pipes thin and loud,
I am most content.

Out on the plunging sea
The frail boats dip and spin ;
Where the cliffs tower drearily
O'er the breakers' din.

Men hold their breath for fear
Of the shrieking hissing foam,
Wonder if day be near,
And think of home.

One on the reeling deck
Gasp at the thundering wind ;
Dreaming of death and wreck,
And what lies behind.

The boy by the gunwale stands
Watching his father's face ;
The wheel jerks in his hands,
In the roaring race.

They wish, but dare not pray,
Weary and tempest-tost,
The word they dare not say
Would confess them lost.

And I sit idly here
Watching the embers fall,
And they are sick with fear,
And God sees all.

HIDDEN LIFE.

The turf is marble underfoot,
The fountain drips with icy spears ;
And round about the cedar's root
The hungry blackbird pecks and peers.

The mud that rose beside the wheel
In liquid flake, stands stiff and hard ;
Unbroken lies the dinted heel,
With icy streaks the rut is barred.

Behind the knotted black tree-tops
The solemn sunset waning burns,
The pheasant mutters in the copse
And patters through the crackling ferns.

Yet down below the frozen rind
The silent waters creep and meet ;
The roots press downwards unconfined,
Where deeper burns the vital heat.

As when the summer sky is clear,
And heat is winking on the hill,
The swimmer rests beside the weir
To feel the fresh luxurious chill,

So earth lies still beneath the night,
And takes no thought of wintry woe,
She shudders with a keen delight,
And nestles in her robe of snow.

One hour of rest from hope, from fear,
She thrills in slumber through and through,
And hardly heeds that spring is near,
When slumbering joys will bloom anew.

Addington, 1891.

VIATOR.

Is this the February air
 That breathes in fragrance on my brow ?
 So soft, methinks, 'twould never dare
 To nip the bloom or whirl the snow ;—
 And yet no hint of treachery
 Lurks in the clear enlivened sky.

The speckled arum-spike begins
 His crumpled glistening cap to thrust :
 Blithe on the road the dry leaf spins,
 The yew is packed with yellow dust ;
 Beneath the elm small things are seen
 That star the dyke with lively green.

Where smoothly dips the sheltered lea
 The merry crested plovers run,
 Or lost in dreamy reverie
 Hoist their long wings to feel the sun ;
 Or wheel with melancholy cry,
 And lessen in the western sky.

The eyes that track them draw the soul
 To fly, to follow where they go ;
 They came from where the torrents roll—
 Where those vexed lands were dim with snow ;
 They little reck what ways they tread ;
 Or by what waters they are fed.

Huge toppling clouds are piled in air ;—
 A bluff in billowy vapour rolled,—
 Faint summits perilously fair,—
 With thunderous base of sullen gold.
 I thread in thought the cloudland through
 To win the upper purer blue ;

The chestnuts by the timbered grange
 Are standing as they stood before,
 Yet somewhat delicate and strange
 Informs them : they are old no more ;
 A hundred times I passed this way :—
 What spirit makes them new to-day ?

The soul puts on her summer dress,
 And tired awhile of scheme and gain,
 Clothes with delight the wilderness,
 And dreams that she is pure again :
 Then idly wondering tries her wing,
 Only content to soar and sing.

Out of the woods sweet spirits call—
Here be at rest, with all forgiven :
Thy burden galls thee ; let it fall,
And take the flowery road to heaven ;
Thou lingerest in the stony way,
Custom, not honour bids thee stay.

*Nay, nay, I answer, I have heard,
 As in some half-remembered dream,
 A note that shames the jocund bird,
 A truer voice than wind or stream
 Ye know not and ye may not know,
 Yet aid me, cheer me ere I go.*

The birds sail home : the mouldering tower
 With measured chime tolls out the day ;
 Close with the irrevocable hour ;
 Make thy brief thanks ; thy vespers pay :
 Tomorrow's seed waits to be sown,
 To-day God gave thee for thine own.

Eton, 1892.

ON THE WESTERN CLIFFS.

Out of the windy waste
Of waters rolling gray,
Homeward the red sails haste
 Across the bay.
Over the downs I see
The summits black and sheer,
When evening on the lea
 Is pale and clear.

There as the twilight falls,
The seabirds float and cry ;
(Only the mountain walls
 Make faint reply ;)
Or with broad wing decline
Down to their rocky home,
Warm in the chilly brine,
 Nestled in foam.

Over the oozy weed
The flying feet haste on,
Hither and thither speed
 Ere day be done.
For them the fry that dive
Poise in their liquid bed,
They neither fear nor strive,
 Sleep and are fed.

Then comes the night, the end,
 What should their dying be ?
 Death steals, a silent friend,
 Out of the sea.
 Under the rocky edge
 They close their languid eye,
 While shrill from tuft and ledge
 Their brethren cry.

Or where the stranded wrack,
 Rimmed on the stunted grass,
 Rattles so dry and black
 As the winds pass,
 The draggled feather flies,
 The frail denuded bones
 Bleach, and the sightless eyes
 On the gray stones.

Under the weary hill
 The wandering footsteps cease ;
 He that must wander still
 Envies your peace.
 Wasted by harsh events,
 Sighs to be large and free,
 Mix with the elements
 And breathe and be.

Skye, 1891.

(Chronicle of St. George).

A JUNE EVENING.

Over the red-tiled roofs and under the elm-trees high
Making a sudden clatter the pigeons wheel in the air :
The marigold stares in the pool and the blown sedge
whistles dry,
And the elder is starred with bloom and breathes her
soul on the air.

Out of the heart of the thicket the bird's song breaks like
a star,
Thrilling the soul with a passion as pure as the driven
snow ;
And the roses drink of the blood of life and glow from afar,
But what they say to my spirit is more than the roses
know.

Cedar and oak and plane that shadow my garden glade,
I know your greenness and gloom and love you each the
best,
You with your slender fans, and you with your knotted shade,
And you with your lively grace and the scars of spring
on your breast.

Deep in the winding lane where the hazels screen the nest,
The high-heaped waggons come with the music of
tinkling teams,
And the trailing sprays fly back, and catch at the load
deep-prest,
And laughter floats on the twilight as fair as the laughter
of dreams.

Yet down in the hamlet below sick hearts are sorry to-night,
 And children moan in their beds at the sounds of the hateful
 strife,
 And dull eyes strain to the dawn and sigh at the chilly light,
 And pant for the bliss unknown and know the burden of life.

Saint and martyr and sage, that die for the weal of your race,
 Penned in the din of the city or mured in the cloistered gloom,
 Say have you felt in your hearts the glory of earth, and the grace
 Of the spring, the flush of summer—the roses that twine the
 tomb?

Oh joy that is knit with pain, oh shadows born of the grave,
 Oh ache of the weary brow and throb of the labouring breath;—
 Yet this is the world I want, and these are the joys I crave,
 And not the passionless gloom on the other shore of death.

Eton, 1891.

AZALEA.

A window into a dusty street :
 A weary head, and a task that brings
 Scanty profit nor aught of sweet
 To the hours that lag on their leaden wings.

Someone dropt me a charm to-day,
 Dropt and vanished and bade me hope ;
 Yellow azalea, one tall spray,
 Caught from a flashing fairy slope.

Bursting out like a starry shower,
 Petals curled like a hanging wave,
 Who that fashioned you, dainty flower,
 Dreamed of a spirit so sweet and brave ?

See my brow to your charm is bent :
 Where you pour from your mystic springs,
 All in prodigal alchemy blent
 Scents that quicken and lend me wings.

What stirs first in the dreaming brain ?
 Sweetness infinite, unaware,
 Aching pleasure and happy pain,
 Drowned in a glory of sunny air.

Forest nooks in a summer world :
 Waters slipping from ledge to ledge ;
 Bowery woodlands heaped and hurled
 Down to the stream from the mountain's edge.

Boats that slide on a brimming stream
Under the shelter of willowy isles ;
Thoughts that wind in a mystic dream ;
Idle laughter and loving smiles ;

Yet there lurks in the honied wine
Something bitter and fresh and strong ;
Wholesome savour of breeze and brine,
Wise and wild as the linnet's song.

Sinks the fragrance perilous sweet,
Suddenly open the dreaming eyes ;
Drowsily hums the teeming street,
Thunder broods in the lowering skies.

Eton, 1892.

THE DRAGONFLY.

Restless dragonfly, darting, dancing,
Over the ribbons of trailing weed,
Cease awhile from thy myriad glancing,
Poised on the curve of the swinging reed ;

Where the lilyleaf smoothes her creases,
Rest like a warrior carved in stone ;
Then when the crisp edge starts, and the breezes
Ruffle the water, arise, begone !

Mailed in terror, thy harness gleaming,
Soldier of summer, a day's desire !
Lantern eyeballs lustrously dreaming,
Mirroring woodland, hill, and spire,

Wondering gaze at the depths that pent thee
Crawling soft on the dim-lit floor ;
Was it the fire in thy heart that sent thee
Brave thro' the ripple, to shine and soar ?

Then when the piled clouds big with thunder
Smite thee down with a summer's tear,
Floating, lost in a languid wonder,
On to the deadly swirl of the weir,

Dream of the days of thy sunny playing,
Take no thought of the depths beneath,
Till the eddies that smile in slaying
Draw thee down to the deeps of death.

I too come in the summer weather,
 Dropping down when the winds are low,
 Float like birds of an alien feather,
 Weary of winter and Northern snow,

Cool depths under us, blue above us,
 Carelessly drifting side by side,
 Is there a heart to guide us, love us ?
 Are we but made to be tossed aside ?

Wherefore question of what befall thee
 Winds that blow from the sunless shore ?
 One hath made thee and One shall call thee ;
 Dream in the sunlight, and ask no more.

Settle, 1891.

KNAPWEED.

By copse and hedgerow, waste and wall,
He thrusts his cushions red ;
O'er burdock rank, o'er thistles tall,
He rears his hardy head :
Within, without, the strong leaves press,
He screens the mossy stone,
Lord of a narrow wilderness,
Self-centred and alone.

He numbers no observant friends,
He soothes no childish woes,
Yet nature nurtures him, and tends
As duly as the rose ;
He drinks the blessed dew of heaven,
The wind is in his ears,
To guard his growth the planets seven
Swing in their airy spheres.

The spirits of the fields and woods
Throb in his sturdy veins :
He drinks the secret stealing floods,
And swills the volleying rains :
And when the birds' note showers and breaks
The wood's green heart within,
He stirs his plummy brow and wakes
To draw the sunlight in.

Mute sheep that pull the grasses soft
 Crop close and pass him by,
 Until he stands alone, aloft,
 With added majesty.
 No fly so keen, no bee so bold,
 To pierce that knotted zone,
 He frowns as though he guarded gold,
 And yet he garners none.

And so when Autumn winds blow late,
 And whirl the chilly wave,
 He bows before the common fate,
 And drops beside his grave.
 None ever owed him thanks or said
A gift of gracious heaven.
 Down in the mire he droops his head ;
 Forgotten, not forgiven.

Smile on, brave weed ! let none enquire
 What made or bade thee rise :
 Toss thy tough fingers high and higher,
 To flout the drenching skies.
 Let others toil for others' good,
 And miss or mar their own ;
 Thou hast brave health and fortitude
 To live and die alone !

NORTHWARDS.

An orb of fire behind the grove
 The sun speeds on ;
 The sliding streams that seaward move
 Are chill and wan :
 The mire is ridged with icy crust,
 The tufted meads
 Are specked with hoary flakes, where thrust
 The frozen reeds.
 The mellow light begins to pale,
 The moon on high,
 Too dim, too cloudlike to prevail,
 Hangs in the sky.

Through this bleak hour that brings the dark,
 Ere daylight fade,
 We fly on iron wheels, and mark
 The changing glade.
 Northwards the shuddering axles reel,
 With merry din ;
 Like moving spokes on some slow wheel
 The furrows spin.
 The copse, the farmstead shifts ; and both
 Fly like the wind.
 Swift runs the distant spire, as loth
 To lag behind.

What means the transient glimpse, the sight
 Of waste and home ?

What stirs the roving heart so light
 To choose and come ?
 They wave a welcome back, *Oh stay*
Thy course severe,
A truce to wandering ! Here, they say,
Lies peace, and here.
Rest, rest, they call, unquiet mind,
Here learn to dream,
To love, and wander unconfin'd
As breeze or stream.

Ah no, I answer, night is near ;
Not mine to set
The bourn I crave : what most I fear
Runs with me yet.
I hurry, hurry through the night,
I hasten on
To see what lands the Northern light
Next shines upon,
When I have learnt what longings are,
What means regret,
Something,—beyond the furthest star—
Shall call me yet.

IN THE SOUTH.

In the sunny summer weather, in a garden by the sea,
 Where the breeze scarce stirs the drooping fans of many a tropic tree,
 Only all the lazy morning to attend my listless dreams,
 Doth the languid eucalyptus breathe the sound of falling streams ;
 High above the huddling houses blinking white with shuttered
 eyes,
 You may see the city, roof by roof, and tower by tower arise,
 Dazzling walls embowered in greenness, spires that peep through
 palm and plane,
 Vines that droop o'er trellised terrace, runlets that forget the rain,
 Upwards ever upwards climbing, till the high-piled tops are won,
 Streaked with tracts of sombre woodland quivering in the steady
 sun.

* * * * * * *

Or about the league-long crest the vaporous cloud is folded gray,
 When the sea is white with breakers and the beach is wet with
 spray,
 And the hills are flecked with coursing shadows, and the hasty
 wind
 Blusters through the garden that was late so indolent and kind.

But to-night sweet peace enfolds me ; only from the lazy town
 Floats the hum of summer voices, and the mighty ships swing
 down,
 Blowing here a mellower horn to bid the wandering truant home,
 Or the solemn convent bells are rung in many a sounding dome,

Or the watch-dog bays belated, and with shrill effusive note
Cocks are challenging the morning perched in homesteads far
remote ;

Idle sounds that mingle with the flying footsteps of the breeze,
Hurrying to cool vales of sunrise o'er the crests of rippling seas.

* * * * *

Man, unlike his fellow-brutes, that wounded creep apart to die,
Flies from shelter, basks in light, and smiles in alien company.
Mocked by life and hope that flies before him, drawing fiercer
breath,
Darkens light and poisons laughter with the undertone of death.

Oh ! the world is strong and careless, soft the sky and still the sea ;
What avails the myriad gladness, if it be not glad for me ?
What for me the brooding sunlight and the creeper's scented
breath,

When a thousand trembling hands are beating at the doors of
death ?

What avails the fragrant passion of the clustering spires of bloom,
If I chafe in hopeless longing, if I pine in lonely gloom ?

Yet I think the load would lighten, could I think that endless pain
Were the seed of love and laughter, when the world is born again.
I could laugh at suffering, were it pledge of some imparted joy,
Gave it but a momentary gladness to a thoughtless boy.

* * * * *

Thus I wrote beneath the trailing vines, not knowing what
might be,

In an island ringed about by the interminable sea.

Madeira, 1890.

HOMEWARDS.

Comrade, the sun is low ;
 Now doth the heavy West
 Burn for leagues like a smouldering coal with a smoky glow ;
 Oh, the day pants for rest !

Higher, the liquid sky
 Green as an ice-fed stream,
 Deepens to infinite blue, and softly inveigles the shy
 Stars from their day-long dream.

Out of the wayside flower
 Ebbs the colour away :
 Crocuses delicate, pink, that lay like a starry shower,
 Dapple the dusk with grey.

Blackness gathers apace
 Under the shrouded pines
 Over the tumbled stones that stream from the mountain's
 face
 Slowly the shade declines.

Only the dying fires,
 Flashes of farewell light,
 Flush in the old stone crags, and flame in the rocky spires ;
 Suddenly falls the night.

Comrade, the dark is come;
 Drop to the welcoming vale,
 Steer to the winding lights and the city's generous hum;
 Then when the dawn is pale,

Quitting the kindly street,
 Leaving the fireside bright,
 Laugh with the parting guest and smile on the child we meet,
 Free as the fleeting light;

We too speed from the west,
 Speed with the rushing earth;
 Still the unsatisfied heart and still the imperious quest
 Mock at our devious mirth.

Hush, for the world must sleep:
 Passion and heat are done:
 Who would the pulsing fervours of clamorous noontide keep
 Till he fade in the sun?

Twilight, pitiful, sad,
 Night, so chilly and stern
 Breathe your vastness upon us, and make us brave and glad;
 Better to brood than burn.

Suns in the heart of the night
 Flame like a restless spark:
 Only the silence waits till the aching gaps unite
 Into the infinite dark.

IDYLL.

Damon the shepherd-singer, on a day
 When the old Earth was turning in her sleep
 To dream of summer and good things to come,
 Sate on a flowery hillock by the copse,
 And heard a throstle on a flying spray
 Chuckle and chirp and make so sweet a din
 That all the merry music of the time
 Stirred in his heart with envy of her song.

So preluding awhile upon a reed
 Which he had fashioned in a maying-time
 But cast away when winter in despite
 Shrilled all untuneful thro' the shuddering trees—
 His eyes indwelling wistful for a space—
 Brake the sweet concert with a sweeter song.

*Spring in the air : and every wind that stirs
 Swaying the budding treetops to and fro,
 Is freighted with a freshness half divine.*

*Spring in the forest ;—tender green steals up,
 Shaming the tyrants of the winter woods,
 Grim yews, and spiky tassels of the pine.*

*Spring in the fields : God's carpet underfoot,
 Starsown with daisies and red spires of seed,
 And golden glory of the celandine.*

*Spring in the soul: and happy thought puts out
The tender bud, where sweetness lies enshrined
With promise of a golden garnering.*

So Damon sang, and all the woods were green.

Cambridge, 1883.

(Cambridge Review).

EARL HACON'S TOMB.

He lieth under a pile of stones,
 On a high and heathery hill :
 The shy deer graze above his bones,
 And the plover whistles shrill.

Eastward and westward fall the streams
 Thro' a broad and level land ;
 But mark how merry the sunlight gleams
 On the sea on either hand !

Oh ye may tread twelve counties round,
 But ye may never be,
 Whence ye may view from moorland ground
 The double glint of sea.

All round about in the peat below
 There are twenty bodies set ;
 Their bones are white as the April snow,
 Their skulls with the streams are wet.

Twenty rovers the old Earl kept
 To work his lawless will,
 They dreamed to serve him while they slept,
 And to-day they serve him still.

Beside each man was a trusty helm,
A sword and javelins twain ;
Heavy and dark are the hafts of elm,
But the sword is a red rust stain.

The old Earl's brow had a gold circlet,
His neck bore a chain of gold ;
But so black a stain on the gold is set
The metal may scarce be told.

The tale of his house is a tale of shame,
No sons of his blood hath he,
And no man beareth the old Earl's name
Save a beggar over the sea.

A ring of stones is the frowning keep,
Grey stones on a lonely moor :
And the ship he sailed in is bedded deep
In the sand on a leeward shore.

Now slit the turf with a mattock strong,
And scatter the stones away :
The Earl that hath dwelt in the dark so long
Shall look on the light of day.

One by one to the day they pass,
The young Lord telleth them all ;
The chain is set in an ark of glass,
The circlet hangs in the hall.

Go cast in the charnel-pit their bones !
Their grave shall hallowed be ;
And none shall know why the pile of stones,
O'erlooketh the double sea.

Sligachan, 1892.

TOO LATE.

Eastward the morning cometh in apace
Over the gray hills and the falling streams,
Yet may not break the silence of her dreams,
Nor flash a waking glory on her face ;
Call to her ; she is silent in her place,
And may not answer ; how the sweet mouth seems
To smile, as though she recked of kindlier gleams
About her, and were dumb for very grace !

The lilies hearing bow themselves for fear,
The red light, beating strong with crimson glow,
Shudders to feel him pass, whom bolts and bars,
Stay not nor hinder, neither threat nor tear ;—
Can ye put back by any prayers ye know
The march of the invariable stars ?

AN ENGLISH HOME.

Deep in a hazy hollow of the down,
 The brick-built Court in mellow squareness stood,
 Where feathery beeches fringed the hanging wood,
 And sighing cedars spread a carpet brown.

Out of the elms the jetty treefolk sent
 A clamorous welcome : while the roses made
 Their vesper offering, and the creeper laid
 His flaming hands about the pediment.

O happy souls, most fatherly denied
 The cares that fret, not quicken : drawn to know
 The healing hands that hang upon the Cross ;
 And through pure agonies of love and loss,
 Wrought into sorrow for a world of woe ;
 And from a prosperous baseness purified.

Bere Court, 1884.

(Spectator)

ANGULUS TERRARUM.

Within the grey encircling walls
The sun leads on another day,
Where quiet leisure hourly calls
Her votary from the world away.

Philosophy shall lap us round
To dream of spheres where all is well,
Not troubled by the uncertain sound
Of those that prate of heaven and hell.

Grave History shall ply her arts,
To shew us, from the storied page,
That Science cannot harden hearts,
Nor stay the heavenward pilgrimage.

No Muse shall be that shall not lend
Her soaring impulse to the soul,
Discern the lover in the friend,
Or point the failing to the goal.

Staid Clio, queen of human speech,
Urania of the starlit eye,
And the sweet maiden that shall teach
The cheek to blush, the heart to sigh.

Neither shall music be denied
To wing the heart that pants to see
The shrine of beauty, half descried,
Half slighted by the things that be.

The sunlight falls on level lawns,
 And wooded knolls with kindlier gleam,
 And statelier palaces adorn
 The reaches of the brimming stream.

The lazy water laps the wall,
 Skirting the terraced walks, that go
 By storied tower and cool dim hall,
 And gardens where the roses blow.

High frown the gabled roofs, and higher
 The huddled elms aerial slope ;
 And peering over all, the spire
 That points a finger up in hope.

These all about me : far below
 A solemn fountain hourly drips,
 Where bronze-wreathed dolphins sprawl and throw
 Sweet water from their green-fringed lips.

And on the lawn with restless feet,
 And nodding necks of changing shine,
 Pigeons patrol, when suns are sweet,
 Westward or eastward, all in line.

And in the dark elms half the day
 Or white-spired chestnuts light the doves,
 Too mild to work, too fond to play,
 And croning half-a-hundred loves.

Heaven all about us ; could we lay
 Our hands upon it, it were well ;
 But oh ! how slight a failing may
 Turn paradise to dreary hell.

The sordid spirit, and the brute
 Impulse, that most, when hearts beat high,
 Tugs at his chains, with throes that shoot
 And quiver, bidding the good thought die.

And only when the soul is dull
 With terror of the looming years,
 And scorn of self, they deign to lull
 The stings that cost us toil and tears.

All these : and sullen discontent
 That chides the smiling **suns of May**
 For burning, yet can find a vent
 For humours, when the skies are **gray**.

These are our foes ; and we will live
 As though we may not wholly slay
 The cares that prick us on to strive,
 The fears that prompt us when to pray.

Like men that watch for some great king,
 A barren frontier, where the sky
 Stoops to the distance, vanishing
 In dimness, and the land is dry.

Sometimes the red sand-pillars stalk
 Across the desert, or the wastes,
 Wan like a level water, baulk
 The thirsty soul that thither hastes.

Sometimes a thin voice seems to float
 Out of the stillness, crying faint ;
 Or the dull seacrow's dismal note
 Sounds, or the bittern's measured plaint.

So long, they know not if they be
 Men, or mere phantoms of the night ;
 Like the pale lights that flicker and flee
 In marshlands, where the rush blows white.

Only that northward, when the wind
 Draws from the land that once was theirs,
 Bells from the city echo, and bind
 Sweet music on the wandering airs.

And once they saw a sight so sweet
 They scarce could trust their wondering eyes,
 The snowbound mountains, at whose feet,
 Their king's imperial palace lies.

*His word, they said, bade the high tower
 Rock to the music of the bells ;
 His eye, they whispered, hour by hour,
 Upon those happy mountains dwells.*

Cambridge, 1884.

(*Cambridge Review*).

AMBERLEY CASTLE.

The enormous hills run smoothly down
In fold on fold of shaven green,
And in the gap a little town
Sleeps, and a river slips between.

It bubbled from a heathery hill
And channelled through the grey ribbed sand,
And now slides seaward dark and still
Thro' hazy leagues of level land.

A stone's throw from its fringing sedge
Grey mouldering walls to ruin slip,
And from the turret's ragged edge,
The brimming ivy seems to drip.

Where once the guardian pool was deep,
The moorhen flaps among the reeds,
And broadbacked waterlilies sleep
Anchored amid the shifting weeds.

There where the green turf laps the walls,
Slow oxen graze, shrill children play,
And when the kindly summer falls,
Swart sun-browned rustics toss the hay.

A farmstead steams where hung the door
Whence smiling gallants paced the hall—
Where roysterers drank and soldiers swore
The merry cottage-children call.

Here where the old priest day by day,
 Saw sunrise thro' his blazoned panes,
 Between tall stacks of scented hay,
 A grumbling ciderpress complains.

Look o'er the ill-swung gate and see
 The black swine rout the streaming soil,
 And piled or strewn neglectfully
 The sordid furniture of toil.

The king that smiled so royally
 Around him, and the sweet sad queen,
 The restless children round her knee,
 Are all as they had never been.

Dark in their oozy bed to-night
 They slumber : all about their bones
 The ivy casts his fingers white
 Whose fibres know the place of stones.

Think of the aching hearts, the sighs
 This old house heard, which stands so still,
 And all the million memories
 That haunt the hollows of the hill.

Think of the eyes that must have stared
 From those blank windows, on the same
 Grey misty flats through which we fared
 We twain, and doubted of their name.

O'er grassy mound and marble rim
 Where one dead friend's poor vestment lies,
 The sudden tears unwitting brim
 Decorous lashes, downdropt eyes.

Or one dear brother whom we miss—
 We mount with reverent step above,
This was his room, we say, and this
The picture that he used to love.

In these walls too young hope was high,
 And love was glorious then as now—
 Shall we behold, and pass them by,
 Nor write one sorrow on our brow?

Shall we not spare one tear to-day
 And pray one prayer in order due?
Here is a human heart, we'll say,
That beats as yours, and thinks of you.

Amberley, 1883.

(Cornhill Magazine).

JANUS.

Lo, as we muse, and strive with wondering eye
 To trace the semblance of the coming years,
 Flower-crowned, fruit-laden, one by one appears
In gracious wise against a golden sky;
Yet when we turn to scan them as they fly,
 This creeps and shudders, sick with wasting fears,
 And that is blotted in a mist of tears,
And meets our wistful look with sob and sigh.

And therefore did that ancient serious folk
 Set high above the turmoil and the din
 Of traffic, and the grim laborious day,
A carven God, twin-headed, blurred with smoke ;—
 The outer, kindly, trivial ; but within
 The eyes that love, the lips that seem to pray.

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

This is the lesson of the world : to feel
 That day by day to wish is not to be,
 That aspiration is not victory,
 And that regret must hurt and may not heal ;

No change : for ever thro' the myriad years
 The woods are grim in winter and green in spring,
 When grain is golden comes the harvesting,
 Man lives and struggles, loves and disappears.

The year goes out in silence : through the night
 The solemn stars troop onward, pure, serene ;
 And the sad chimes in their remorseless flight
 Tell the stern record of what might have been ;
 Is there no hope then ? *Nay, in heaven above*
And in the earth is silence, save for love.

Addington, 1885.

IN A COLLEGE GARDEN.

Once in a time of sunshine and cloudless weather,
 By the brimming river moving to the sea,
 The wind and I and the morning laughed together,
 Merrily and loud laughed we.
 Mockingly I flung on the turf beside me,
 My withered volume with its homilies and saws,
Preach on, I said, but whether weal or woe betide me,
No word of yours hath been the cause.
Preach, I said, if ye will, to the old and ailing,
In my hand are the visionary years,
Leave their cloistral disms to the faint and failing,
I have no faithless fears.
Let me scan as I lie the seasons thronging ;
This brings glory and that brings warmth and love,
Surely, I said, my vure and eager longing,
Hath its counterpart above.

Then I reigned so mightily for a season,
 Hope and faith and eternity were mine,
 I was lord in the royal right of reason
 Of a destiny divine.
 Time denied me my will, but ever smiling ;
 What of that ? I could wait the promised hour.
 Day by day with a certain hope beguiling
 Hurricane and cold and shower.

Am I awake at last ? and was it dreaming ?

While I so wondered, indolently reclined,
 Busy brains have been labouring and scheming ;—
 Am I left behind ?

These my comrades who faced the stormy weather
 They sit throned in the ample hall to-day,
 Will they remember the years we lived together ?
 Will they envy my delay ?

*By the sweet ambitions, I cried, that moved us,
 By the birthpang of many a hallowed thought,—
 Nay, they said, we remember that you loved us,
 Only the time is short.*

*Who will plead, said I then, for a soul rejected ?
 Love sat silent and tears were on his cheek :
 Wistfully smiled like a stranger half expected,
 Only no word would speak.*

*I am undone, I cried, I have wholly blundered,
 I looked for peace and have found despair instead,
 Then love nestled towards me, and as I wondered,
 Then thou art mine, he said.*

HERO-WORSHIP.

We work and we are weary ; we are spent
And spend our hearts in cares that we despise,
Yet if we dare but ply our failing eyes,
Strong eager souls are still to cheer us sent,
To whom the very failures we lament
Are beautiful, and little deeds sublime ;
Who see beyond the rolling mists of time,
The eternal country whither they are bent.

As that grim prophet, when the Syrian host
Thundered at eve across the upland, there
In Dothan, and about the huddling town,
Spake naught, most heedless when they mocked him most,
Seeing how God all night above the down
Drave his red squadrons up the shuddering air.

Eton, 1886.

STAND ASIDE.

Stand aside ! The battle is but beginning,
 And the field is wide !
 No room for dreamers ! the fight is worth the winning ;—
 Wherefore stand aside !
 Hark to the clash of steel, the murderous rattle,
 As the ranks divide ;—
 Hast thou heart for the fury of the battle ?
 Stand aside !

Why ? I know not ; perchance thy leader saw thee ;—
 He was here anon ;—
 Thou wert wistfully gazing out before thee,
 As the flying spears swept on ;
 Thou didst stand, on thy sword a moment leaning,
 Was it languor, or fear, or pride ?
 Ask not, answer not—Truth ! it needs no screening ;
 Only stand aside !

Rage in thy heart ? It comes too late for mending ;—
 Rage was best before :
 Tears in thine eyes ? Good lack, he knows no bending ;
 Hark to the infinite roar !
 Thou hast leisure to frame a million reasons ;—
 Oh ! but truth is wide :—
 This be thy task, as seasons slip to seasons ;
 Only stand aside !

Thou wilt hear, on the lonely hillside wending,
 When the fight is done,
Down in the valley the sounds of music blending,
 And the shouts of victory won ;
We fare rudely—and rude will be our laughter ;
 Yours to think and pray !
You will fight, you say, in the long hereafter ;
 Stand aside to-day !

It may be we shall fight again together,
 You will do your part ;—
Give me rather the grave beneath the heather,
 Than the wounds which smart !
You will hover on heights of airy scheming,
 Heights that we ne'er have tried ;—
Ours the slumber without the need of dreaming ;
 Therefore stand aside !

Eton, 1891.

(1)

ART.

To range abroad at will,
 To pluck the flower and trace the woodland stream,
 Sleep when I will, and when I sleep to dream,
 Enfolding, gathering still ;

To be at large and free,
 To hover high, not wallow with the low ;
 No impulse to reject, no fear to know,
 To learn humanity :

All day, and then at eve
 To sort my prodigal spoil, and portion out
 This medicine for despair and that for doubt,
 Nought for myself to leave ;

But give myself, the best
 That I could fashion, giving self the rein ;
 Royally, recklessly, my joy, my pain ;—
 Then claim my sovereign rest.

(2)

FAITH.

To sit at home and sigh,
To check the tired eyes that are fain to soar,
Beyond the blue hills and the winding shore
In careless liberty :

To curb each impulse wild,
To drudge and minister and ask no fee,
And should rewards shower on me, let them be
To bless some wondering child.

To portion out the light
And sweetness, that may just suffice to give
Due strength to keep the failing brain alive,
And nerve the hand to fight ;

As some rich tree that grows
Cribbed and confined, its young luxuriance shorn,
To bear the sweetness it would ne'er have borne,
But for those biting throes.

(3)

THE COMPROMISE.

Not mine to reconcile
 The seeming paradox, not mine to choose
 Between the pure and high—to reign ; or lose
 The kingdom for a while

For that thin crown that hangs
 Above the starry silence, oh, meseems
 Too faint and delicate for aught but dreams !
 Yet whence these envious pangs ?

The sceptre or the rod ?
 This most I dread : to hear the pleading call
 And falter : grasp and hesitate : to fall
 Between myself and God.

Lambeth, 1892.

NON OMNIS MORIAR.

My spirit strove with me and said,
Why sit'st thou here alone and vile ?
Mix with thy fellows : weep and smile,
And let them hear thee, see thee ; then
Thou shalt be throned midst mighty men ;
Or pious hands shalt crown thee dead,
And thou shalt live a little while.

Nay, said I, Nay, I would not be
Read with a sneer and tossed away,
To pine where dusty tomes decay,
Piled in some high unfriendly shelf
With men as luckless as myself ;
Full fifty more long-winded rogues
To cumber tedious catalogues :
That is not immortality !
Oh, let me live my life and die !

Would'st not ? my spirit sternly said ;
Then be a man, and love and wed,
That lusty sons, long ages hence,
May somewhat dimly reverence
Thee, as their certain fountain-head,
Though of no other consequence.
Thou canst not quicken thought ? What then ?
At least mayst live in other men.

Nay, said I, *Nay : is't not enough*
That I should creep and loiter late ?
What ? should I so perpetuate
This faltering, this inconstant stuff ?
Bind in this shrinking fearful mind
More deep in generous humankind ?
Oh no ! I may not play the part
To compromise another heart,
Its ampler fortunes to resign
Indissolubly mixt with mine.

My spirit spake no more, and I
 In such sad triumph made reply.
No claim upon my race I'll make,
For this I cannot ratify :
No human heart I'll bid to ache,
Bearing my burdens as its own ;—
Vile I may be, but not alone ;
God seems with tender grace to send
The equal love of comrade, friend,
Of kith and kin : and after these
The large air and the moving trees,
The meadows and the secret springs ;
Ah me ! I love a thousand things !
Quickly I'd die and quickly fade,
This is the way that men are made ;
This is enough, for me to scan
My heart, and own myself a man.

OLD FOES.

What, must I leave the banquet and the laughter,
 Oh thou pale visitant that criest low ?
 Wilt thou be ever thus ? Far hence, hereafter,
 Oh art thou other than the thing I know ?

As one that listens from his window leaning,
 When night's slow curtain shuts the glen from view,
 Now with a thrill of sweetness overweening,
 Now with a shudder at what may be true,

Hears many times, but ever doubts in hearing,
 Borne by the shifting breeze now loud, now low,
 Too faint for hope and too distinct for fearing,
 The distant measured footfall come and go.

Fear, silent fear, I deemed that thou hadst left me ;
 Why dost thou dog my shrinking path again ?
 Lo of what manliness thou hast bereft me !
 Where is the fortitude that comes of pain ?

Why dost thou whisper, *Love's a merry madness,*
Friendship's the easy brotherhood of youth ?
 I would not wilfully abide in sadness,
 Save that I fear thou whisperest but the truth.

Nay, but I answer : if indeed thou callest,
Grant me a respite while I plead with thee,
Small was my joy : I thank thee for the smallest !
Come when thou wilt and be one with me.

*Lo, I am free ! I choose the pain thou bearest ;
Thou art the messenger of One who waits ;
Thou wilt reveal the hidden face thou wearest,
When my feet falter at the Eternal Gates.*

Skye, 1892,

HOC UNUM CUPIO.

I only ask to know it is thy will,
 That thou hast planned the pain and probed the sore,
 That when I welter in dark waves of ill
 They were thy choice before :

Not some blind beating of insensate might,
 That knows not whence or why, but hastens on,
 And recks not if its stroke be strong or light,
 Nor whom it falls upon.

Saying, *I know no recompense or stay,*
By no saint prayers my favour may be won :
Sometimes I spare the sickening life, or slay
The bud that drinks the sun.

I ask not, answer not : I break or bless :
Think not I come to ease or end thy woe :
Think not thy youth so apt for happiness
Moves me to let thee go.

O Father, that we chide thee, is it well ?
 I suffer, but I did not ask to be :
 And if thou hurry me from hell to hell,
 To shake my hold on thee,

I am thy child, though wrecked in stormy seas,
 Sometime my tears shall thy compassion move ;
 I can endure thy bitterest decrees,
 If certain of thy love.

INTEREA.

When pain and stubborn sorrow first
 Entrapped me, as a prisoned bird,
 Moping, I deemed myself accurst,
 Or raging on the bars I burst,
 Yet nought but my own plumage stirred ;
 Alas ! poor bird !

Now, growing calmer, I'll be wise,
 And bravely fold the quivering wing ;—
 But give the rein to eager eyes
 To range unchecked the further skies,
 And till my Winter melt in Spring,
 I'll sit and sing !

Eton, 1892.

PROSPERO.

O close the book and let the pages lie,
 Not flap and ruffle in the idle wind ;
 Prison the mocking sprites that unconfined
 Would wreck the world with easy jollity.

O I have lived and loved my lordly art
 And lo I pass, yet this my art shall be,
 To weave new spells unknown, unguessed by me
 To break like morning in some later heart.

The fabled Sibyl in her haunted cave
 Gave all her written leaves to the vague breeze ;
 So we, more secret still, will let the wave
 Steep them in thunder of the wandering seas :
 Matted and coiled in oozy water-weed
 No mortal eye shall scan them : they are dead indeed.

Roselill, 1891.





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